



Waldo Street Area Study Committee January 18, 2013

MEETING NOTES

Committee Members

Select Chair Betsy DeWitt,
Co-Chair
Selectman Dick Benka,
Co-Chair
Adele Fleet Bacow
James Carr
Derrick Choi
Carol Gladstone
Peter Kleiner
Marilyn Newman
Efi Pagitsas
Linda Olson Pehlke
Elizabeth Zachos

Committee members present: Betsy DeWitt, Dick Benka, Adele Fleet Bacow, Derrick Choi, Marilyn Newman, Efi Pagitsas, Elizabeth Zachos

Committee members not present: Peter Kleiner, Linda Olson Pehlke, Carol Gladstone, James Carr

Staff: Kara Brewton, Andy Martineau, Greer Hardwicke

Guests: Rita McNally, Susie Roberts, Eunice White, Jean Stringham, J. Robert Basile, Martin Yaseen, Robert Basile, Anne Meyers, Paul Saner

Committee members met from 8:15 to 9:30 am

Meeting Minutes from 12/3/12 and 12/13/12 were approved as amended.

1. Preservation and Financial Consultants:

Preservation Consultant: Kara presented a draft outline of topics to be covered by a preservation consultant from Structures North including:

- a. Challenging the Waldo notion that any change of use from the existing autobody shop (most of the building) would trigger financially infeasible structural and building code issues.
- b. Recommendations for a building use (including one the Committee may not be considering) most likely to work financially while preserving as much of the Durgin garage as possible.
- c. Developing a list and providing an estimate for major building code / ADA and structural costs, for reusing the garage without removing any of the floor plates (note that this should include looking at window repair and possibly allowing aluminum rather than steel casings). The list should also include issues with taking down the rear portion of the building past the ramps as well as preserving just the façade along Pleasant Street.

The Committee agreed that it is important to have an independent party quantify the scope of work necessary to reuse/preserve the Durgin garage as well as to set expectations for the Committee's remaining work. Additionally, an independent report concerning the costs of preservation would be useful for future ZBA hearings concerning the Durgin garage that may be considering zoning relief in connection with proposed development.

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Questions:

1. Will a preservation consultant be able to answer our questions about reuse of the Durgin as a parking facility and what adaptations are necessary?
2. Can we hold preservation/structural engineers accountable for cost estimates?

Financial Consultant: Conversations between the Durgin owner and CHR are in progress, however we are not entirely sure what may result from those talks other than the current retailers will likely remain in place in the near term. Proceeding with a financial consultant, Pam McKinney, will be helpful to further the progress of the Committee's work. The financial consultant's scope should allow flexibility for modifications in the event the property changes hands and the Committee needs to address different or additional reuse possibilities.

Linda Olson Pehlke Handout: It is important for the Committee to understand the synergy and value add that a potential development may have with respect to the Coolidge Corner neighborhood. The Committee should use Linda's suggestions to both inform and guide the work of the Preservation and Financial consultants to the extent possible, and should include in their scopes the ability to ask for feedback on , e.g., particular financial incentive tools. It is expected that the subcommittees will complete the more general tasks of further investigating issues concerning potential use scenarios (i.e. financing options, design, regulatory and other policy issues). Ultimately, the financial consultant's focus will be to quantitatively show 3-4 reuse scenarios that may be feasible. The work scope should also allow for Pam's qualitative input in response to Committee or staff questions on issues such as reuse impacts on surrounding property values, daycare/library uses, and financial resources.

Action Items:

1. Kara to have preliminary discussion with preservation and financial consultants about specific issues the Committee would like each to consider in their analysis of the Durgin garage.
2. Kara to amend the wording of the consultant's guide to reflect that the A and B scenarios are not on hold and should be considered in the analysis.
3. Committee to meet with Pam to discuss her initial thoughts, in response to proposed scope, re what specific reuse scenarios Pam should consider in her analysis.

Voted unanimously: The Committee recommends the retention of a structural/preservation consultant and a fiscal consultant, with the scope of work to be determined by the Town's Acting Director of Planning and Community Development after discussions with the consultants.

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2. Public Feedback:

Martin Yaseem stated that he believes that Waldo Street when compared to Stedman Street is wide enough for sufficient auto and pedestrian access and that future development of the site should not include a driveway onto John Street in light of the volume of pedestrians that travel along John Street. Martin requested that that committee strongly consider the impact an increase in traffic as a result of any commercial development may have on the neighborhood and that perhaps an age specific residential development might be a better option in that regard.

Efi Pagitsas stated that the traffic studies completed to date are a very preliminary examination of the traffic impacts of any of the scenarios being considered. Efi also clarified that the width of Waldo Street is not sufficient for cars and pedestrians to circulate safely and that some other form of egress would be necessary as a relief valve as well as for emergency vehicle access.

Martin stated that what currently happens on Waldo Street with respect to sidewalk parking and traffic circulation is not an indication of what might happen if the site is developed.

Betsy DeWitt clarified that Waldo Street is a private way to which several of the abutting properties own to the centerline. Additionally, since Waldo is a private way, there may be limits on the Town's ability to tell the owners how they may park their vehicles along that way. You cannot compare Waldo Street with Stedman Street because the Town can control what occurs on Stedman as it is a public right of way.

Bob Basile stated that just because the current owners park on the sidewalk does not make it legal. Bob also stated that it will be important for the Committee to have developed guidelines so that any future development is not detrimental to the character of the neighborhood. Bob stated that he and his tenants oppose having vehicle access off of John Street and that maintaining primary access on Waldo Street makes sense as it is currently surrounded by commercial properties and would not impact residents on John Street.

Efi stated that John Street access may only be necessary for emergency vehicles and that a more comprehensive traffic study will be required of any development. Efi also stated that current traffic circulation from Waldo to Beacon Street is problematic as only four cars can stack up at the intersection. Whatever development results will require a balanced approach to dealing with both auto and pedestrian circulation issues.

Betsy stated that there are a number of variables the Committee does not fully understand yet. Betsy stated that the goals of the Committee are to explore a broad base of development options for an underutilized space that are satisfying to both the neighborhood and the Community as a whole.

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Susie Roberts stated that it may be worthwhile for someone to examine the property deeds to find out who actually owns the various easements in the study area and if any of them have specific use criteria. It could be that some property owners are asserting rights they do not actually have.

Questions:

1. How much would it cost for a thorough review of the property deeds for the entire block?
2. Could Town Counsel assist with a review of the property deeds or at least the history of how the easements came to be? Knowing the history could influence how someone reads interprets the information on the deeds.

3. Draft Report Writing: Kara and Andy will begin putting together a draft report using the Committee's work to date. There will be a section outline by the middle of February for the Committee to review.

Meeting adjourned: Next meeting TBD. Likely sometime during the week of Feb 4 with subcommittee meetings to follow.